

# Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

JANUARY 1989



Lt. McElwain to Capt. Miller, "How was the flak at your altitude?"



The General and the Crew Chief also known as Travis and Heiliger.



Martha Raye gets signatures for her "short snorter."



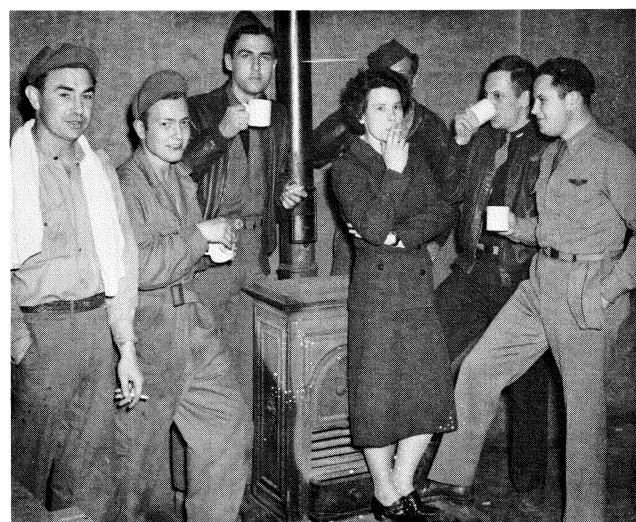
Sgt. Morton examines his spacious fish bowl.



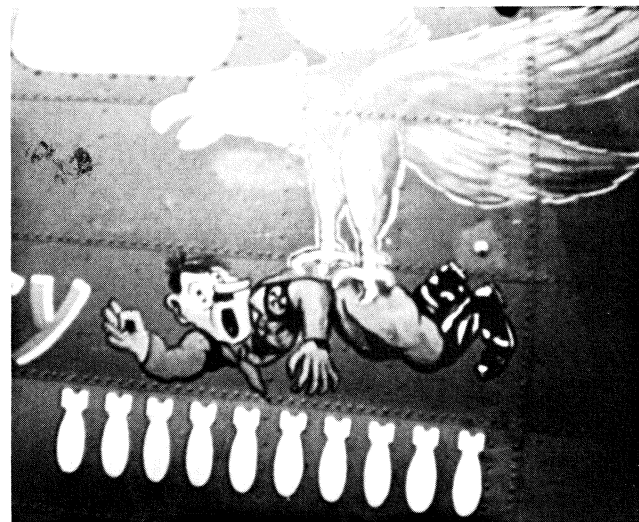
Jan. 20, '44 - Bon Voyage for Hell's Angels Aircraft. But what happened to the ground crew? Where are they now?

1942 - 1945

## MOLESWORTH IN RETROSPECT



Lucille Parker, former aviatrix and Red Cross worker, presides over a "hot stove coffee klatch."



Who crewed the a/c Desperate Journey? See Forum letter on page 5.



## 303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC. "HELLS ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

VOL. XII, NO. 1 Editor: Hal Susskind 2602 Deerfoot Trail, Austin, TX 78704 JANUARY 1989

The 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc., a tax exempt organization under IRS Code 501(c)(19), founded in 1975, is chartered in the State of Florida to perpetuate the history of the 303rd Bomb Group and to provide opportunities for 303rders to meet and do things together.

Because you are helping to perpetuate the history of the 303rd Bomb Group, your dues and/or donations to the 303rd Bomb Group Association are tax deductible.

The Association is open for membership to all persons assigned or attached to the 303rd Bomb Group, from its activation in 1942 in Boise, Idaho, throughout its war years at Molesworth Air Base in England to its deactivation in Casablanca in 1945. Spouses of 303rders may also become members. All other persons, interested in perpetuating the history of the 303rd Bomb Group and in furthering the aims of the Association, may apply for Associate status.

Membership years begin on the first day of January. In the future, the 303rd Bomb Group Newsletter will be sent only to paid up members. When you pay annual dues, the membership chairman will send you an updated membership card.

If you do not receive the 303rd Newsletter for a period of more than four months, it means you are delinquent in your dues for that calendar year.

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#### HELL'S ANGELS NEWSLETTER

Editor ..... Hal Susskind  
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## A Special Invitation to All Members

Members of the Norfolk City Council join me in endorsing the invitation of the Norfolk Convention and Visitors Bureau for the 303rd Bomb Group to have its reunion in our city.

Norfolk is the hub of Hampton Roads, that for generations has enjoyed a historic relationship with the United States military. Standing proud in the center of our revitalized downtown area is the MacArthur Memorial Museum, a lasting tribute to the life and times of the late general. Testimony to the greatness of today's military may be witnessed at Langley AFB, home of TAC Headquarters and Ft. Monroe TRADOC Headquarters.

Although the changes in Norfolk are bringing about the cultural and commercial advantages of the big city, visitors become "wrapped up" in its small-town charm and friendly atmosphere. They enjoy Norfolk's unique Downtown Trolley Service, the Waterside (Norfolk's waterfront festival marketplace with over 120 shops and dining places), luxurious hotels and motel accommodations, outstanding seafood restaurants, and an unparalleled variety of attractions and entertainment.

It is with pride and dedication that Norfolk has assigned two full-time military reunion coordinators to assist you with all of your reunion needs.

Again, Norfolk, invites you to experience her maritime charm and hospitality in 1989.

Joseph A. Leafe  
Mayor

# Hell's Angels Forum

## Your Chance to Sound Off!

### Reflections

First, congratulations on your color news letter, it was great, and yes, lets go for one a year and try for sixteen pages.

Now I want to add to the very fine letter from Marty McGuire in the August 1988 Newsletter.

(1) Father Skoner was every bit as Marty portrayed him. Father Skoner used to leave his black notebook at the pay desk and those who owed him would pay up. Also, I believe his picture is on page 35 in the book "First of the Many".

(2) On Captain Billy Southworth. I flew as lead bombardier with Billy on 8 Combat missions. We had a Cardinal Red Bird painted on the radio compass. On Billy's 25th mission we flew over the field and threw out baseballs.

Billy's father was Manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, and usually wrote Billy every day. On the crash, my recollection is that he went down in a B-29 in Flushing Bay. Our crew got some attention based on his father, but Billy was the consummate pilot and a very nice guy.



Bob Hope and Capt. Billy Southworth

Speaking of celebrities, I sat with Clark Gable at mission briefing on which one of the 303rd Squadrons took him along as top turret gunner. During the whole process Gable was absolutely treated like everyone else. We sweat the briefings and the chow

line after debriefing. The 303rd was there to do a job and who you were in the past was of little concern.

We frequently flew in aircraft last three #649 named "VICIOUS VIRGIN". Hal, if you publish this letter, let's hope that someone connected with that aircraft in the 427th Squadron will read this letter and know that one Abbott Smith is profoundly grateful and alive thanks to them. Time, as Marty said dims the memory, however, I believe that the Crew Chief's name was Jim Calavoti and is number one on the gratitude list and that of Curt Olsen. Curt incidentally wrote in chalk "down with the tyrant on the CO's door" (Major Hagenbach at that time).

Abbott Smith  
Barboursville, W. Va.  
25504

### What's a Flim Flam?

One look at the cover of the August, 1988, *Hell's Angels Newsletter* and I spotted a flim-flam that I'll bet a lot of the guys are going to point out to you.

I refer to the "Loading the airmail addressed to Hitler" caption under the picture. You're a bombardier, and you know those bombs are the 100-pound practice bombs you trained with in school (I flew bombardier students for 17 months). Somebody was going to do some bombing practice in a B-17 made in 1942 (read the serial number) and someone took a picture of the bombs before they were loaded into the airplane.

What's worse, I believe the names were drawn on the negative, not painted on the bombs. Am I right?

William F. Miller  
Black Forest, CO 80908

*Ed. Note: Sorry to disappoint you Major but I used the picture as it was sent to me. It was a salute to the armament section which did a great job at Molesworth.*

**For the past three years I have read tremendous letters outlining many acts of heroism by members of the 303rd. I honestly believe we were short changed in the awards department. Let's make this an agenda item at the next reunion.**

# Forum

## More About the Knockout Dropper

Around mid-August I wrote you a letter of considerable amount. An item of which I spoke was the fact that Harold Froelich had spoken of the accidental death of one Buford Pafford. As I said he had his men mixed up as Vic Cozza was the man who was killed, and this is correct.

Since then, there has been some dialogue going around in the squadron. It seems that some are upset because this was published in error. Of course this wasn't your fault as you can only print what others have told you. Martin Yaniga, crew chief and Fletcher Helton, crew chief and both later flight crew chiefs, were there when this accident happened. Therefore you may get or have already gotten more word on this. Since this happened some 44 years ago, you may get some different views as it is from memory and although in many ways and times it is good as yesterday, there are some times when it is not. I received a letter from Lester Hansen, he spoke of this and is knowledgeable of what happened. What I told you in the letter is fairly accurate.

Thought I'd add this to back the others up and to let you know what these others had to say.

**James C. Hicks**  
Henderson, KY 42420

*Ed. Note: Thanks for your help. We printed a correction in the August '88 issue.*

## Down Memory Lane

I ran across these pictures in my photo album and thought they might bring back some memories of 40 years ago with the 360th of the 303rd BG.

The two of myself and Gen. Travis were as you can see unposed. This particular day we must have had an engine change or repair of some kind on the aircraft. Anyway someone says, "here comes the recon." We all looked busy immediately. I didn't even have time to retrieve my cap. Gen. Travis walked up and I was pretty nervous with such a visit. He asked me how the morale was, how is the food and are we getting enough passes. My sidekick, John R. Hughes walks up with his camera

and says, "Do you mind if I take your picture, sir?" He looked at John and with a little smile says, "OK Sonny." We had nothing but respect for Gen. Travis after that.

The small one is myself. John Hughes and Walter Bourke waiting it out at Casablanca until we flew the infantry home from Europe and Italy.

**Robert B. Heiliger**  
Milwaukee, WI 53219

*Ed. Note: Heiliger was crew chief of Iza Valable Too and Sack Time.*

## The 303rd Were Baseball Champs

I don't often think of it and remember to ask, but has anyone else mentioned that the 303rd Boys were the baseball champions of the Eighth Air Force and lost the Theatre Championship to the winning Infantry team from over in Europe? I still don't remember what year, probably 1944. Just a thought from one of the team and I can't remember names, except for "Red" Craddock the pitcher

**Jimmy Stewart**  
Rochester, WA 98579

## A Plug for the 444th

Referring to the last "Hell's Angels" newsletter about the "Yardbird" on page 8, center. The credit for repairing it to flying status should go to the 328 Service Squadron, which became the 444th Sub Depot. We had the hangar and did the heavy repairs of battle damage, etc. I remember the "Yardbird" when it was in the hangar for repairs. We had the equipment to make the necessary parts for these heavy repairs. The machine shop where I worked made many pieces to splice the spars, with the necessary fitted bolts, on many B17s.

For a short summary of what we did, this quote is from the booklet "The First 300". This is the last paragraph of the "Small Outfits do Big Jobs".

"Work of this service organization began with the group's first mission in November, 1942, and has progressed at an increasing pace ever since. It is almost impossible to estimate the total work done by men in the organization, but here is a short summary of the output

during a recent six-month period: Crews repaired 569 battle damaged Fortresses, set up 298 engines, accomplished 1871 work orders and packed 5,000 parachutes. The air corps supply section issued 15,000 serviceable items, shipped 8,426 repairable items to depots, issued 283 engines, returned 308 old engines to depots and issued more than 200 airplane fuel and oil tanks."

This shows that we labored sometimes long hours and we do like to receive credit for what we did.

Thank you for doing such a good job on the "Newsletter". I have a scrapbook containing much information about the first couple years of missions. If you are interested, I will send it to you for you to copy anything of interest to you if you will later return it to me.

Thank you again and hope to visit with you at Norfolk.

**Henry G. Johansen**  
St. Paul, Minn. 55119

*Ed. Note: I'm sure members of the Association would enjoy reading about the early missions you have in your scrapbook.*

## "Bonnie-B" Mini-Reunion

On 20-23 September 1988 four of the original crew of the "Bonnie B," (359th), 42-31483 BN-P, and three spouses met for our first mini-reunion in Las Vegas, Nevada. The enclosed photos show the crew and spouses. Lawrence Johnson, Ball Turret Operator, and his lovely wife, Beverly were our host and hostess filling our every moment with such activities as a private escorted tour of the famed Thunderbirds at Nellis AFB, a steak

bar-b-que, boat ride on Lake Mead, tour of the famous Hoover Dam and a beautiful and fantastic Las Vegas show, just to name a few.

In addition to Johnson, the other original members of the "Bonnie B" crew attending were Frederick Corbin, bombardier, wife Theresa, Julian Dennis, radio operator, and me, George Bech, Jr., pilot, wife Betty, Floyd Sanelli, engineer and Elbert Cox, tailgunner were unable to attend. Franklin Hall, co-pilot, Ernest Cotter, navigator, and Robert Cundiff, waist gunner are all deceased. The whereabouts of Edward Boatwright, waist gunner, is unknown.

It was a very exciting and emotional time for all of us and we plan to continue with our mini-reunions every two years, alternating with the 303rd reunions. Our next one will be in 1990 in my home town of Santa Rosa, CA.

Our get togethers all started with the 303rd reunion in Seattle where three of us met for the first time since leaving England in 1944. The next reunion at Ft. Worth found four of us together. We then started a search, lead by Julian Dennis, of other crew members. We have located, one way or another, a total of nine out of ten.

The "Bonnie B" was named by my crew in January 1944 for my daughter Bonnie who was born on 14 December 1943. She is now at Maxwell AFB with her husband Col. Kenton Ziegler.

Some of you may recognize "Bonnie B" from the notoriety she gained by being one of the 17's in Keith Ferris's mural in the Aerospace museum of the Smithsonian Institute.

SEE YOU ALL IN NORFOLK.

**George N. Bech, Jr.**  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403



(l to r) Theresa Corbin, Julian Dennis, Fred Corbin, Betty Bech, George Bech, Beverly Johnson and Lawrence Johnson

## Forum

### There's a Lot of Potential Members Out There

A friend recently gave me a copy of THE RETIRED OFFICER and I was delighted to learn of the existence of the 303rd BG Association from the Reunions section.

I am an alumnus (pilot) of the 303rd BG (359th Squadron, May-Dec 1944) and for the past couple of years I've been "flying" with the 306th's (Thurleigh) formation. About two years ago I read a book, FIRST OVER GERMANY, that gave a most vivid description of Eighth Air Force bombardment experience from the 306th's point of view. However, as the missions are related they can apply to any B-17 Group. The author, Russell Strong, was a navigator and is secretary of their Association. The book was loaned to me and after reading it, I wrote to Rus to obtain a copy and learned it was out of print and no copies are available at present. Since that contact he has added me to their mailing list and I receive his quarterly publication "306th Echoes". Perhaps I deviated a little here but I thought that you might find it interesting.

Back to the 303rd! Again, I can't tell you how pleased I am to reestablish contact. I would appreciate any information that you have available to send me, perhaps a list of members among other items that might be available. I assume that the reunion notice for Norfolk, VA is for 1989. Please send also a membership application and related information so I can get back into formation.

**James A. Hickey**  
Sun City Center, FL

### Where Are The Ground Personnel?

In the August issue of Hell's Angels Newsletter, a picture was shown of the ground crew of the Holy Mackerel taken on March 10, 1943. I was a member of that Crew and am the one to the far right of the picture. The others, left to right, are Crew Chief Jesse Ashlock (died of cancer June 12, 1988); Asst. Crew Chief Oseike; Joe Worthington; Vogleman; Joe Strange; and Mazzonie.

I have been in contact with only two of these men since the end of World War II; Ashlock (deceased)

and Joe Worthington at the last three reunions in Washington, D.C., Seattle and Fort Worth. I have no knowledge of the whereabouts of any of the other Crewmen.

You may have already heard from Joe Worthington about our concern of getting the ground crew members of the 359th Sqd. together at the time of the 303rd reunions. I believe his intention was not to separate any members from the Association but to merely try to find more of our buddies to get together to reminisce about our experiences and memories of Molesworth. At each reunion we have discovered that only about a dozen have attended. This is a very poor turnout (given the fact that some may have passed away in the meantime). We would like very much to keep in contact with any of the ground crew that may be found.

Part of the time during the three years I spent in the Air Force in England, I was Barracks Chief of #3 Barracks of the 359th Sqd. at which time there were over thirty personnel there. Where are they now? We hope they are all alive and well and would like to see them join the 303rd Association.

Hoping this information will be of help and perhaps the missing members can be located.

**Robert C. Stone**  
Indianapolis, IN 46219

### Did You Know Homer Allen?

In my search to find Air Force records of my uncle, Art Frankel of the 95th put me in touch with Paul Andrews of Virginia who gave me the address of Norton Air Base, Ca. to write for flight records. I was so delighted to find that he was with the 303rd (360th). Frankel then gave me the address of Carl Fyler and I have now joined your Association as an Associate member and enjoying two of your Hell's Angels newsletters. I have also joined the 8th AFHS.

My uncle was 2nd Lt. Homer R. Allen, navigator on crew of 1st Lt. William H. Breed, plane "Shak-Hak," shot down on Feb. 16, 1943, "seven miles N.W. of Brehart, France." (National Archives Record). Should this be Brest? This crew was one of the original 8 crews of the 303rd (360th). These original crews are shown in August

'88 newsletter, submitted by Walt Shayler, who signed Homer's Flight Records in England as 1st Lt. then Capt.

Lt. Homer Allen (my uncle, tho' only 3 years older than I), from his flight records was based at Corsicana, Texas (cadet training) Mather AFB, Calif. (navigation school) Alamogordo, N.M., Biggs Field, TX, Kellogg Field, Michigan and Nov. 1942, APO #634, ETUSA.

Those signing Allen's flight records in the States were: Oliver E. Ford, Jr., Major (Corsicana, TX) and Jack B. Riley, Nav. Oper. Off. (Mather Field, CA). After his assignment to the 303rd, Lewis E. Lyle, 1st Lt., Alamogordo; George L. Robinson, Major, Biggs Field, TX; Leon W. Blythe, Capt., Kellogg Field, Mich.; Dec. 42 signed by Louis M. Schulstad for Walter K. Shayler, 1st Lt. in Eng.

I recently received Homer's personnel records (some pages partly burned) showing that he was promoted to 1st Lt. posthumously and he had received the Air-Medal.

When Homer was declared dead, his mother (my grandmother) put all of his belongings in his foot locker and buried it in a memorial grave. The only thing we have of his is a picture taken in his uniform when he was home on leave.

Homer left no heirs. I want all descendants of our families to know about Homer's part in this flight to preserve their freedom and his ultimate supreme sacrifice. To this end, I want to make up a

portfolio on him with his records, pictures, etc. I also want to make a wall hanging on him with his records, plane and crew, etc., patches of the 303rd, "Hell's Angels, Might in Flight," bars, decorations. Can I have his Air Medal replaced? His wings?

I was pleased to find members of the original 8 crews listed as members of your Association; 12 active, 3 deceased. I would like to correspond with any of you who knew Homer Allen, especially regarding any records or recall any of the circumstances of his (Breed's) plane and crew going down on Feb. 16, 1943, apparently on a mission to St. Nazaire. Did it go down at sea or on land? If so, is it possible that there may be graves where they went down? Were any POWs? Or fortunate to return to the base? Unfortunately, the part of the page in Homer's personnel file regarding "cause of death" is burned and unreadable.

Could the Allies have won the war in Europe without the strategic bombing? I was in Berlin, Austria and Prague (all Hitler's) in summer of 1939 as a 17 year old member of YMCA tour. We saw nothing but uniformed men and military equipment, were highly entertained by young officers of the Nazi Youth Movement. It was scary! We were so relieved to see the Statue of Liberty in the harbor and I vowed never to leave her jurisdiction. Two weeks after our return, Aug. 15, 1939, Hitler marched on Poland. And we were on a German ship. The Europa. Went over on the



**Lt. Breed's crew; Homer Allen was the navigator on this crew.**



# Forum

sister-ship, the Bremen, "Ghost Ship" of the war.

**Virginia Howell**  
418 S. Dos Caminos  
Ventura, CA 93003

*P.S. Through the courtesy of Walt Shayler, here's a photo of Breed's crew taken in front of Shak-Hak.*

## More from the Old Timers

Memories are growing dimmer, but I wonder after reading Walt Shayler's letter about P.G. Moore bailing out over the target. I do not remember this being P.G.

After consulting my diary entry, date November 23, 1942, I find the following: "Capt. Fulgrum, the group navigator, bailed out over the target, reason unknown." Let's hear from others regarding this event. Lew Lyle should recall this.

Also, on this date our squadron, the 359th, lost their first ship, Lt. Reddig pilot. This was over St. Nazaire.

After reading Walt's list of the 360th air crews, I thought you might use one of the 359th original bunch.

**John R. Shoup**  
359th Squadron  
Larned, KS 67550

**359th Sqdn, 303rd Group**  
**Annex "A" To Special Order 63**  
**HQ, AAB, DTD Oct.1, 1942**

### Crew # I

P Capt Calhoun, William R.  
CP 2nd Lt Nix, James S.  
N 2nd Lt Strickland, Joseph M.  
B 2nd Lt Dominick, George B.  
E T/Sgt Zaorski, Roman R.  
A/E Sgt Fortunak, Richard C.  
RO S/Sgt Terry, Charles R.  
ARO Sgt Mulgrew, William G.  
G Sgt Owen, Calvin H.  
Pass Maj Romig, Eugene A.  
Commander

### Crew # II

P 1st Lt Eyster, Ercil F.  
CP 2nd Lt Hayward, Fred H.  
N 2nd Lt Gillam, Jackson P.  
B 2nd Lt Cargill, William D.  
E S/Sgt Dunham, Harold J.  
A/E Sgt Powell, Marvin F.  
RO S/Sgt Roberts, Raymond K.  
ARO Sgt Davis, Markus K.  
G Sgt Bauer, Floyd E.  
Pass M/Sgt Brucher, Martin  
Line Chief



**Captains Calhoun and Gable**

### Crew # III

P 1st Lt Bales, Ross C.  
CP 1st Lt McGouch, Wilson N.  
N 2nd Lt Browning, Richard C.  
B 2nd Lt Thomas, Paul M.  
E S/Sgt Winter, Raymond K.  
A/E Pvt Perkins, Homer T.  
RO S/Sgt Kilgore, Raymond H.  
ARO Sgt Klee, John P.  
G Sgt Snell, Jack D.  
Pass S/Sgt Robinson, Allen R.  
Armorer

### Crew # IV

P 1st Lt Witt, Orville S.  
CP 2nd Lt Woodman, George C.  
N 2nd Lt Brightbill, Donald H.  
B 2nd Lt Dyar, Wilmer E.  
E S/Sgt Woods, Lyle C.  
A/R Sgt Renner, Warner R.  
RO Cpl Thorton, Edmund R.  
ARO Sgt Bachom, Thomas F.  
G Sgt Thomas, Lawrence W.  
Pass 1st Lt Von Holdt, Richard E.  
Weather

### Crew # V

P 1st Lt Roller, Jack  
CP 2nd Lt Cline, William J.  
N 2nd Lt Henson, Walter C.  
B 2nd Lt Shoup, John R.  
E T/Sgt Marcelonis, Joseph  
A/E Sgt Kerton, Frank M.  
RO S/Sgt Williams, Lemuel R.  
ARO Sgt Beringer, John L.  
G Sgt Burnham, Arthur L.  
Pass 1st Lt Kalhoefer, Herbert E.  
OPS Officer

### Crew # VI

P 1st Lt Saunders, Frank A.  
CO 2nd Lt Kirk, Leonard W.  
N 2nd Lt Forester, Oscar F.  
B 2nd Lt Kossis, Norman  
E T/Sgt Cozza, Victor J.  
A/E Sgt Wagner, Lloyd E.  
RO S/Sgt Clevenger, Walter M.  
ARO Sgt Hoklin, Lief H.  
G Sgt Chitwood, Russell O.  
Pass S/Sgt Cerow, Warren H.  
Armorer

### Crew # VII

P 1st Lt Stouse, Harold L.  
CP 2nd Lt O'Connor, Squire F.  
N 2nd Lt Elliott, Jesse H.  
B 2nd Lt Mathis, Jack W.  
E S/Sgt Audiss, Eldon W.  
A/E Sgt Tupper, Theron S.  
RO S/Sgt Richardson, Donald R.  
ARO Sgt Garriett, John W.  
G Sgt Stephen, Willard W.  
Pass 1st Lt Neff, William J.  
A/C Maintenance

### Crew # VIII

P 1st Lt Reddig, Arthur E.  
CP 2nd Lt McMurtry, Francis M.  
N 2nd Lt Ercegovich, John  
B 2nd Lt Ward, Grady B.  
E Sgt Van Fleet, Robert  
A/E Sgt Mann, Ferrell A.  
RO Sgt Nolen, Devon B.  
ARO Sgt Sturgis, Gerald S.  
G Sgt Senior, George T.  
Pass Capt Black, Abraham  
GP. Surgeon

### Crew # IX

P 2nd Lt Sanderson, Ellis J.  
CP 2nd Lt Bowman, Horace D.  
N 2nd Lt Spence, John W.  
B 2nd Lt Plummer, John W.  
E S/Sgt Devers, Sidney  
A/E Sgt Swanson, Harry F.  
RO S/Sgt Jones, Miles B.  
ARO Sgt Greene, Frank W.  
G Sgt Markiewicz, Joseph L.  
Pass Capt Kalman, Bernard  
GP. Hq.

## Who Crewed Desperate Journey?

*The letter below from Charles A. Palmer to Jean Fessler was forwarded to me by Jean for inclusion in this issue of the newsletter.*

Thank you for your letter inviting me to join the Mighty Eighth. However I do not feel justified in joining this exclusive group of WW II courageous men. I was a member of the 819th engineers who built the first American heavy bomber field

in England. We also constructed the fighter strips on the beach-head, and subsequently into France and Germany. I was not a member of any bomber group.

Your letter explains how my story reached Hal Susskind in Austin, Texas. I am pleased to know that Colonel Knox was interested enough to forward my story. Mr. Susskind contacted me requesting permission to publish part of my story in future newsletters. I would really enjoy receiving a copy of the newsletter with my story.

This bit of information should be of interest to the crew members of "Desperate Journey." My brother, Joe Palmer flew "Desperate Journey" before it was severely damaged on one of his early missions early in 1943. He was assigned another bomber that was named "The Avenger," a fact that I never knew until Hal Susskind wrote me. My mother happened to be watching a movie in our local movie theatre in Beechview, Pittsburgh, when during the newsreel 8th Air Force B-17s were filmed returning from a mission, close up shots were made of the names of the Forts. She was taken by surprise to see "Desperate Journey" on the nose of one of the Forts. The manager of the theatre was very compassionate when he agreed to splice out two or three frames showing "Desperate Journey" with ten bombs painted on the fuselage and a painting of Hitler in the grasp of an eagle. I was never completely satisfied that this was my brother's Fort because he completed his tenth mission on the 24th of June, 1943, and was shot down on the 25th of June. And now that Hal Susskind informs me that Joe named his B-17 "The Avenger" after one of the gunners that was killed on their third or fourth mission, the mystery in my mind is finally resolved after all these years. So now I want you or Hal Susskind to release the information in his newsletter that I have two enlarged color prints of "Desperate Journey" that should interest any of the crew members of that bomber, taken from Movie-tone or Pathe News that was shown all over the country during the war.

**Charles A. Palmer**  
141 Laurie Drive  
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15235

# Reunion at Margraten

By Charles Palmer

*In the August '88 issue of the newsletter I told about the story that I had read in the Pittsburgh Press about the four reunions in England between Lt. Joe Palmer of the 303rd and brother Charles who was building airfields in England at the same time. Their fifth reunion was held at the American Military Cemetery in Margraten in Holland. Charles has given us permission to use the story in our newsletter. Let's pick up the story as Charles travels on the train from Amsterdam to visit the American military cemetery in Holland.*

It was May 1987 and I was traveling alone on a train from Amsterdam, speeding smoothly southward toward the only American military cemetery in Holland.

The flat countryside showed no sign of the World War II battles fought there. How much blood had spilled into the Dutch soil from the dead and wounded soldiers? How many traumatic memories do the Dutch retain? Do they ever forget the awesome sights and sounds? I thought of planes that crashed in Holland during the war. How can they ever forget the impact of a major war? As I traveled to the town of Margraten, where Joe and some of his crew were interred, my thoughts went back to those terrible months early in 1943.

The train sped past the small town of Geleen. We were nearing Maastricht. Checking my map, I noticed I was near areas known all over the world as datelines during World War II; Malmedy, St. Vith, Bastogne, Aachen, the Ardennes. Thousands of American soldiers were killed there near the end of the war.

The sky was gray and overcast. A cold, damp wind swept in from the North Sea. Holland reminded me of England. As we sped past the small towns, I noticed many civilians riding bicycles effortlessly on the flat terrain; half of Holland lies below sea level in a network of lakes, rivers and canals. Somehow it made me think back to the Normandy invasion, when my battalion built the first emergency landing strip on the beachhead by laying metal planks.

I checked into a hotel and began to explore the charming town of Maastricht,

where the U.S. Ninth Army had made its headquarters during the war. I fell in love with the town and its people. They had a relaxed, unhurried attitude, and were polite and helpful. The cobblestone streets were crowded with shoppers. Others were sitting in sidewalk cafes. Colorful banners hung from the buildings and over every road and alley.

The Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial in Margraten is 6 miles from Maastricht. I had difficulty conversing with the bus driver, but with the assistance of other passengers who spoke English, I counted out enough guilders for the fare.

The road in front of the cemetery has a long military history. It was used by the Romans and later by Napoleon in his conquest of the region. Now the American Battle Monuments Commission oversees 65½ acres of former farmland owned by the Dutch government but granted free in perpetuity to the United States. Margraten is the final resting place for 8,301 American soldiers, and another 1,722 are commemorated in tablets honoring soldiers missing in action.

At the cemetery I met Albert Rooding in the visitor's building. Rooding, who is most cooperative and sensitive to the emotions of Americans who visit graves of relatives, is the Dutch guide employed by the commission. I was given literature on American military cemeteries in Europe, and a musical record, "Do You Remember," dedicated to the Americans who gave their lives liberating Holland. The record is in English on one side and Dutch on the other. The song was recorded by a Dutch symphony with a male chorus and tenor soloist. Rooding gives out about 100 copies a year to relatives of the dead soldiers. The lyrics, though a bit awkward in translation, are a moving testimony to Dutch appreciation for the sacrifices made by American soldiers:

## "Do You Remember"

*If you come near Margraten  
You will find the big American cemetery.  
Thousands of soldiers lie there,  
Having unlimited leave.  
They were ordinary people just like us,*

*But nevertheless we call them great heroes,  
Considering all the things they did for us.  
Now they rest, far from home, in our fields.  
Do we ever think of that now?*

*They fought here;*

*We were liberated by them;*

*They must have suffered a lot of agony*

*In those sad and anxious war days.*

*They gave up everything for us,*

*And what was their profit?*

*Nothing. They even gave up their youth.*

*Have we ever thought of that again?*

*Yes, have we ever thought of that again?*

Joe's plane was lost June 25, 1943, while returning from a bomb run to Hamburg. Our family received a letter three years later from Termunte, Holland, describing the scene as the plane was hit, caught fire and partly disintegrated before crashing into a field. Seven bodies were found in the wreckage, according to the letter from A.J. Wannen.

"The mayor ordered services to be held for the victims, so the poor boys were carried to our little church. The next day the burial took place with great solemnity. The organ played, a sermon was preached and a clergyman recited the 'Our Father' in English. When things quieted down and the Germans left, we all brought flowers and placed them on their common grave. Thus the men rested here for two years. A couple of months ago the bodies were disinterred and taken to be placed in a cemetery for all the Allied soldiers who died in Holland."

Rooding was born seven years after the war ended, in 1952. "When I qualified for the job here as custodian guide, it was just a memorial, nothing more, but doing more and more administration the language became easier. My interest went to the people that are buried here. A lot of people are impressed by the beauty of this cemetery.

"I would like them to remember the boys we have buried here who gave all they had to give — their lives. As a father of two sons, I started to realize what these men did. From the states to Europe, a totally unknown country to them, but still they came to liberate the people — among

them, my parents," he said with genuine sincerity.

"An American visitor once told me, 'Send a letter to Reagan and the Kremlin that they should see each other up in between the crosses here, and not in fancy hotels.'"

Rooding offered to escort me to my brother's grave. We walked up three steps and I was immediately confronted with the emotionally arousing sight of 8,301 marble monuments. As we slowly passed row after row, I was made painfully aware of the brief tragic story that each marker related: "PFC.../ 3rd Infantry, 8th Div. / Pennsylvania, April 11, 1945."

I certainly did not anticipate the groundswell of emotion that was building within me. I was walking along the rows of American soliders who were buried in a foreign country. I couldn't hold back the flow of tears. Rooding, who was walking at my side, spoke softly, "That's all right. Don't hold it back, or feel embarrassed. This happens."

The thousands of white markers became blurred before me as we walked toward my brother's grave. With great effort I managed to say, "But this is such a waste!" gesturing with my arms to cover the entire cemetery.

Rooding disagreed with me. "We do not consider it a waste. These brave soliders sacrificed their lives for the liberation of my country, and we shall never forget it."

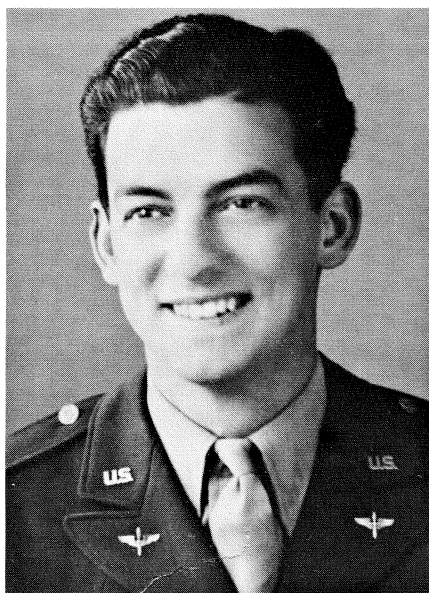
We reached Joe's grave. After 44 years, the sad reunion finally materialized. Reunion in Margraten. "Joseph F. Palmer / 1 Lt., 360 Bomb Sq., 303 Bomb Gp. (H) / Pennsylvania, June 25, 1943." His life was summed up in a few words on a marble cross.

I couldn't help but think back to our last reunion in England. We were laughing and joking and projecting a happy-go-lucky attitude, but we both knew what the immediate future held. I wondered how he and all those young men who consistently witnessed violent death high over Europe could withstand such intense pressure and not crack up, although some did end up with a "Section 8."

The fact that I was in the midst of so many American war dead in Holland had a great impact on me, far beyond my expectations. I had visited Arlington Cemetery years ago, but not with the same reaction, for they were interred in America. They were home near their loved ones.

Rooding remained with me for about a half-hour. Speaking softly, he explained with pride how the groundskeepers cut the grass twice a week and periodically wash each marble cross and Star of David. The cemetery is pampered ground.

As I casually strolled between the graves,



Joe Palmer

I noticed markers indicating that many soldiers were killed two or three months before the war ended.

I could almost hear them call out to me: "Hey mister, how are things in the States?"

"How are my New York Yankees doing?"

I walked slowly past a blur of white marble markers. Somehow they belonged together in Holland where their lives ended so soon. This was a unique camaraderie.

"Tell my mom I love her."

"Sir, could you get someone to put my name on my cross. I don't want to remain unknown. I HAVE A NAME."

"You noticed — I was a general. Let me tell you how proud I am to be here with these young soldiers."

"Me, too. I won the Congressional Medal of Honor, but I value this comradeship even more."

"You can't tell which of us is black, can you? It doesn't matter now, though, does it?"

"Hey, mate, tell those Vietnam vets that they're not the only ones who were forgotten."

A large American flag waved gently in the breeze. Somehow the flag took on more significance in a foreign country.

"Hi, big brother. You finally made it after all these years. I'm glad Mom and Dad couldn't make it when they were alive. It would have been too much for them."

Mom thought it would be great for you to get into commercial flying after the war, and you wrote me, "I can't think that far ahead."

Hey, big brother, you're crying. Don't. It doesn't hurt anymore."

Rooding told me each of the 8,301

graves was adopted by a Dutch family. I was surprised and pleased to hear this. I was also moved when I saw a busload of Dutch children visiting. On the Dutch "day of remembrance," May 3, they place flowers on the graves of American soldiers.

The day before I left Margraten and Holland, I met Lambert Dutz at the cemetery. I was resting on one of the concrete benches and absorbed with the solemn view spread out before me, oblivious to the stranger sitting next to me. I tried to imagine each man represented by the markers, from every state in the union. What sort of person was he? What were his dreams? His goals? Who did he leave behind? What future might have awaited him had he survived the war? How did he die and who was the enemy soldier who killed him?

My thoughts were interrupted by the Dutchman next to me. He asked the obvious, "Do you have someone here?" I told him it was my brother and asked him if he had someone in the American cemetery. Dutz told me he was a teenager when the German army conquered and occupied his country. When the U.S. Army drove the Germans out, he became acquainted with the American soldiers and made many friends. Looking out over the cemetery he told me, "I come here three or four times throughout the year so that I will never forget what they did for my country."

During my last day in the cemetery I noticed trucks unloading chairs for the May 30 Memorial Day activities. Rooding told me that 10,000 chairs were being set up to accommodate the crowd of visitors. The Dutch know the meaning of Memorial Day.

I felt somewhat ashamed of our own indifference to the day. To most Americans it means time off from work, a picnic or cookout, a ballgame. World War II and its awesome price in lives has very little relation to Memorial Day in America. But then the closest we ever come to the sounds of war are Fourth of July firecrackers, or a truck backfiring.

Before I left Holland, I made one last visit to Margraten. I said a final prayer at Joe's grave and also those of his copilot, Bob Sheldon, and a turret-gunner named Gullage. Once again I did not anticipate another buildup of emotion as I walked away from the 8,301 markers. I was going home to America. I was abandoning these soldiers. They would remain in a foreign country forever. It would be impossible to return the remains to America. Once again I couldn't fight back the tears. Two voices seemed to call out to me.

"Don't forget, mister, I have a name."

"Goodbye, big brother. Take care."

# Forum

## Honored by the French

Belatedly I'm sending you some photos that you might or might not want to use in the "Hell's Angels Newsletter". Four were taken clandestinely by a towns-person of Malicorne-sur-Sarthe and show the wreckage of "The Mugger" which was shot down on July 4, 1943 outside that town. The other is a shot of the monument that was erected on the scene by its citizens after the war.

I'm also enclosing a stat of the original design of the marker which has a cylinder of one of the B-17's engines mounted on top. The inscription is in French and reads as follows: "Here on 4 July 1943 an American Fortress crashed. In the memory of the aviators who found death and those who gave their life to succor the survivors of the crew. France is grateful to those who gave their life for liberty." In addition, the names of my brother, Robert S. O'Connor, and the bombardier who was killed in the air combat, Richard Peterson, are inscribed on the stone.

Since last writing you, I have had a long and detailed letter from Donovan B. Manifold who was Bob's co-pilot on the last mission. Don mentions that there was much battle damage, two engines were shot out and a third ran away and, finally, the right wing was on fire when the crew was ordered to bail out. Don recalls their steering the aircraft away from a town to avoid civilian casualties (it must have been Malicorne). He barely got out and Bob was coming behind him but never made it. Don had been hit and apparently blacked out momentarily in an explosion aboard the aircraft just as he got out. Fortunately, he came to as he neared the ground, popped his chute and landed very shortly thereafter. Don had had a lot of his equipment torn off in getting out of the plane and in the descent and had second and third degree burns as well. Before he could get to cover in the nearby woods a German patrol captured him.

It is not my place to tell Don's story but he had a rough time in two hospitals and at the interrogation center near Frankfurt before finally being sent to Stalag Luft III.

Don said Bob was on his 23rd



**Memorial to Lts. O'Connor and Peterson.**

mission. I have also heard from Earle A. Steele who was the bombardier on the B-17 (later named "Hunga Dunga") on which Bob flew from Bangor to Molesworth in October of 1942. The aircraft captain was Joe Haas and Bob was co-pilot. There was a lot of illness that winter because of the weather and lack of amenities and Bob was in the hospital when Joe Haas and some of the original "Hunga Dunga" crew were lost on a mission to St. Nazaire when the plane took a direct hit. Earle was flying with the crew of "Werewolf" that day because of crew shortages, but they too were hit so badly that they had to bail out over Southern England. Through the efforts of Earle and others, Bob was assigned as an A/C after he got out of the hospital and Earle served with him on "Yankee Doodle Dandy". Earle finished his 25th mission with Bob on June 13, 1943. In fact, 21 of Earle's missions were with Bob. It was Bob's hospital stay that caused him to get behind the others in missions and why he was aboard "The Mugger" on that July 4th.

It was really kind of both Don and Earle to share their experience with me. Regards.

**Neal N. O'Connor  
Princeton, N.J.**

Your card arrived two weeks ago! Don't know where it has been all this time.

I was not a member of Lt. Robert O'Connor's crew at the time of his mission to Kiel, on May 19th. My first mission with him was on June 25 to Hamburg.

Our last flight was in "The

Mugger" on July 4th. This was Bob's 23rd mission and my fifth mission. Our target this day was an aircraft engine factory in LeMans, France. After a rather large diversion maneuver, we headed across the English Channel for our assigned target area.

We were escorted by RAF Spitfires across the channel and into France. When the "Spits" had to break-off at their maximum range, we were supposed to have been picked up by P-47s. These were to escort us to our target and back to the point where the "Spits" would pick us up again and escort us home.

Unfortunately the P-47s did not arrive on time and we were intercepted by "The Abbeville Kids." These were the FW-190s from one of the very best German fighter groups. (At one time this group was commanded by Herman Goering.)

On the first head on pass, our number two engine was shot out. Very shortly after this our number three engine propeller went into flat pitch and ran away and could not be feathered. I don't actually know if this engine had also been damaged by enemy fighters before the prop ran away. In any case we could no longer maintain our position in the formation. Thus we soon were pounced upon by the FW-190s. We were being shot up very badly, and a fire started in the right wing. There were many hits throughout the aircraft, including the nose section; at least one in the cockpit.

Our gunners were firing away, but I don't know if they actually shot down any of the enemy fighters. Bob and I were very busy in the cockpit. Unfortunately we had no chance to reach the English Channel.

We headed towards a town. I have no idea which on it was. (In retrospect, I think it may have been Malicorne-sur-Sarthe.) Some of our controls had been damaged by the enemy fighters.

Bob turned on the alarm bell, and announced over the intercom to bail out. I don't know if the intercom was still working. We succeeded in turning the aircraft away from the town. (As we were over France, Bob was concerned about avoiding civilian casualties.)

We were on fire and Bob said to me, "let's get out of here."

I had received a scalp wound above my right ear, and had a small piece of bone chipped away above my right eye socket. I don't know the extent of the injuries to Bob at this time but there was some.

I unstrapped, pulled my bail-out oxygen bottle and headed for the exit. We were oh fire.

We were using chest type parachutes. When I got near the exit, I saw the navigator sitting there. Immediately I pushed him out; he had his parachute on. I think Dick Peterson was dead at this time.

Just as I snapped on my chest pack there was an explosion and I think the aircraft went into a spin. Bob was behind me, and I don't know if he had time to attach his chest pack before we started spinning.

When I came to, I was nearing the ground, popped my chute and hit the ground in a short time. My helmet, oxygen mask, gloves and flying boots had been torn off. I landed in a wheat field that had apparently been recently harvested. There were small pieces of metal falling around me but I did not see the aircraft.

I collapsed my chute and noticed a wooded area about two hundred yards away. I started for that as a place to hide. Just as I started I heard some shots and shouting. I turned around and saw two German soldiers running towards me. I was captured immediately.

They took me to an officer who spoke a little English. He wanted to know where the rest of my crew was. Of course I had no idea and would not have told him if I had known. Later he took me to hospital in LeMans. Here I learned that I had second and third degree burns on my hands and face and scalp wounds. They kept me here one week, then I was taken to a large hospital in Paris. Here I spent four weeks.

After this I was taken to Dulag Luft in Frankfurt, Germany. This was the location of the interrogation center for POWs. There I had a rather rough time; four weeks in solitary. As I had transferred from the Royal Canadian Air Force in England; the Germans had no information at all on me. Even my dog tags had been torn off in the accident.

Finally they gave up and sent



## Forum

me to Stalag Luft III. Upon arriving there I immediately looked for Lt. O'Connor. When I learned that he was not there I hoped he had been able to escape. It was not until much later that I learned he had been killed in the crash of "The Mugger".

I didn't know that Bob had not been awarded the DFC. I just assumed that he had because he certainly should have been awarded that and the Purple Heart.

Bob's brother Neal wrote me a letter recently. In this he told me about the monument to Bob and Dick that the folks in Malicorne erected and maintained in their honor. This is something that I had not known about.

Unfortunately my scrapbook which had the names of our entire crew was lost a number of years ago.

**Donovan B. Manifold**  
Fairfield, CA 94533

### A Walking Advertisement for the 303rd



*The letter below was forwarded to me by Bill Heller, Sqdn. Director for the 360th.*

Some months ago you sent me info regarding availability of patches, pins, etc.. Thought you might enjoy seeing these pictures of my reunion "uniform." I purchased patches and badges from the 303rd Bomb Gp., 8th AFHS and Cockpit magazine and the USAF retired cap came from the MacDill AFB Exchange. (We now have caps on our 303rd P.X.)

The patches on the back of the jacket were made by my daughter-in-law. She has a sophisticated computer controlled sewing machine and made these for my jacket. The top patch is an enlargement of an original I purchased at Molesworth and I still have it. As you can see the "Toydoll" is very well done. The lower

patch was a surprise for me; a B-17 silhouette, the serial number of the airplane I was assigned -4338672, the box score (Hardin 35, Fuhrer 0). You cannot see it in the picture, but there is a star on the fuselage and left wing. In addition PU for the 360th Bomb Sqdn., and "I" item for that airplane call sign are sewn on the fuselage.

In January '88 my wife and I attended a caterpillar association reunion in Orlando, Fla. During the reunion we went on a tour of the Space Center at Cape Canaveral. My wife has a jacket with a number of patches as well as her caterpillar cap. (She has the caterpillar having bailed out of an AT-6 at night in 1945.) Anyway, we were waiting to reboard the bus to return to Orlando and a young man approached me and asked if I had been in the 8th AF? I asked, "How can you tell?" We were not very inconspicuous!

There was a "cold front" in Orlando in May '88 during the 8th AFHS, Florida Chapter, reunion last month. This "cold front" (probably 85-90 degrees) made it necessary for me to wear my jacket during the business meeting. One member later asked if I was the one with the jacket and I replied, "yes." Then I had to explain the patches on my back. The lady then said, "I thought you belonged to a motorcycle gang."

**Tom Hardin**  
St. Petersburg, FL

## Comments on Des Moines

### —MOMENTS OF INSPIRATION—

The six members of the STAFFORD family were there — remember at Fort Worth our first introduction to the lovely two sisters in their wheel chairs and their blind sister Diane — well they were wheeling and rolling and seemed to be having a ball — talk about your "BLYTHE SPIRITS" — I'd like to hereby nominate them as our SWEETHEARTS of the 303rd!!!

### —IDLE MOMENTS—

During a lull in Saturday's activities, our Ex-POW, Ed Giering, took the time to locate the local cemetery where his crew mate Sgt. Donald Price has been interred. Sgt. Price was killed on the same mission and plane that put Ed in a German POW camp. It proves we do remember!!! Giering placed a floral remembrance on the grave site.

### —MOMENTS OF LAUGHTER—

Remember our group photographer that took the chase pictures of the Fort Worth B17 Chuckie and then on landing was involved in the plane crash that followed? Well Coleman Saunders did it again. This time he navigated a car load of our people to a fish dinner, took two hours to locate the restaurant, 15 minutes away, but atoned for getting lost by picking up the check. Way to go Coleman, dinner was delicious.

### —MOMENTS OF GRANDEUR—

Should see Bud Klint resplendent in his western Sunday-go-to-Meeting clothes—puts Robert Redford's "ELECTRIC COWBOY" to shame. Bud, you looked SUPER!!

### —MOMENTS OF PRIDE—

At the main Saturday banquet it was announced that our group's president Dr. Carl Fyler was elected by the general meeting assembly to the board of directors of the 8 AFHS. This will give the 303rd a strong voice in any future selection of a memorial site, as Gen. Lew Lyle was also elected. Both make our group a vital force in the 8th's direction.

### —DARKER MOMENTS—

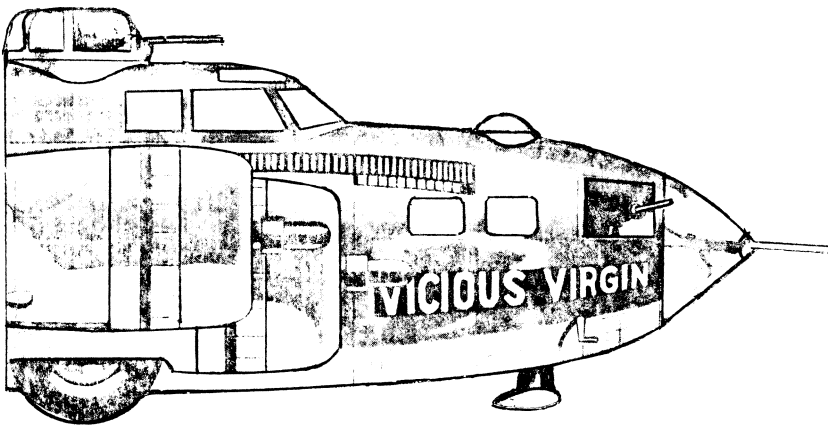
A very distressing fact was revealed by Pres. Dr. Fyler during our rendezvous meeting, revealing that due to the failure of a high number of our members not sending in their dues to our treasurer, we are facing a serious financial crunch. Hey guys, no household, business, or organization can successfully operate if they cannot budget their activities because of lack of funds to pay for them. Come on now, 10 bucks for our continued existence can't be too big a burden, pay up!

### —MOMENTS OF REFLECTION & NOSTALGIA—

This Sunday morning memorial service was an impressive reminder of the terrible price paid by our comrades that did not survive, and the pain and hardship of the POWs. The presentation of the POW medals to more than 100 former 8th personnel told a belated story of their ordeals—Truly WE DO REMEMBER—

**Harley E Cannon**





# Who Done It?

"Vicious Virgin", a B-17F-45-B0 of the 427th Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group, shown in the combat markings she carried in February, 1944. This aircraft, after flying many of the Eighth Air Force's roughest missions, was turned over to the 444th Sub Depot, and rebuilt as a formation assembly ship. All excessive weight—guns, armor plating, etc.—was removed, and alternating red and white stripes, each ten feet wide, were painted on from nose to tail and from wing tip to wing tip. Approximately 24 high intensity red flashing lights were installed in various positions on the wing, body and empennage of the aircraft. The lights were designed to blink a code letter "C" about five times a minute. The "Virgin" served in this role for about one year until the early spring of 1945 when the aircraft was landed with wheels up upon returning from a local ferry flight.

*Vicious Virgin addenda: The upper text was published in "The B-17 FLYING FORTRESS" (A Morgan Aviation Book, Dallas, TX) LOC cat card #65-16862 by Steve Birdsall. In the 1960s, at the request of Hirsh Shireman, United Airlines, I sent many 303 BG aircraft pictures to Steve and interchanged much correspondence with him. He used some of my pictures in his book.*

*To supplement his story of the "Virgin" I add the following:*

Rebuilding and modifying that airplane was done as a fill-in job whenever we didn't have battle damaged A/C to work on. The biggest and most lengthy job was to design and build the components used in the flashing light system. Henry Johansen cut and polished a cam that he put on an intercooler door motor to activate a micro-switch that operated a relay that flashed the lights. After the rework the airplane name was unofficially

changed to "The Scarlet Harlot". I vividly remember that night in the spring of '45 when she was belly landed on one of the runways after taking a visiting fighter pilot back to his base. I was in bed-alone, damn-it-in my quarter when my phone rang and a very sheepish voice (I recognized it immediately) says:

"Mac, old buddy, the Harlot is lying on her belly out on the runway. Can you and your crew get her off and get her fixed so that we can use her in the morning for the mission and so that Raper won't find out what I just did?"

"How in the hell did you do that?"

"Guess I didn't get the wheels down."

"Who the hell was co-pilot?"

"I was"

"Who was the A/C commander?"

"I was, in fact I was the only one on board."

There are not many in our BGA that remember the incident. Only two of us are privy to that phone conversation, and I'll never reveal who made that phone call to me, other than to say he has been active in the association for years.

Maybe we ought to run a mystery contest, "Who Done It?"

**Mel McCoy**

*Ed. Note: An interview with the intrepid mystery pilot will be printed in the next issue of the Newsletter.*

## IN MEMORIAM

**Andrew P. Roth**, 427th Sqdn., a life member of the Association passed away on Sept. 9 1988. He is survived by his wife Agnes.

**Clarence Wesley Quinn**, 427th Sqdn. died suddenly of a heart attack at his home in Clearwater, Florida on April 24, 1988. He served as an administrative specialist at Molesworth during the war and afterwards he returned to the media field, working for a newspaper, radio station and TV station in New York for 11 years. He retired as TV station manager of WXFL-TV in Tampa, Florida. He is sur-

vived by his wife Edna, three children and five grandchildren.

**Charles E. Grace Jr.**, passed away on May 9, 1988. He was with the 360th Sqdn. He was shot down over Hamburg on June 20, 1944 on his 19th mission while flying as a radio operator on Lt. Parker's crew. He spent the rest of the war in a POW camp. He was a life member of the national organization of Ex-POWs. He was also a member of the Northwest Central Ohio Chapter of the Ex-POW group in Lima, Ohio. He is survived

by his wife Myrna, two sons, a daughter and three grandsons.

**Henry G. Prussman**, 359th Sqdn, died of cancer on Aug. 26, 1988 at N. Smyrna Beach Florida. He is survived by his wife Glenna. He attended the reunion in Seattle where he was reunited with his crew's waist gunner after a 40 year interlude.

**Frank Nestock**, a tail gunner with Don Johnson's crew in the 360th, passed away on Dec. 11, 1988 in Homestead, Florida. He is survived by his wife, Dottie.

**Sidney E. Guthrie**, 359th Sqdn, passed away on June 2, 1988 in Industry, PA. He is survived by his wife Ruth.

**Selwyn (Pappy) Flowers**, passed away in the fall in Texas. Pappy led a very colorful career with the 303rd Bomb Group. He completed 30 missions and was instrumental in training many of the younger pilots assigned to the group. Pappy spent years gathering material for a book on the 303rd. His son Jim hopes to finish it for him. More on Pappy will be covered in a future issue of the newsletter.

## 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

***Might - in - Flight***\*\*\*\*\*  
APPLICATION FOR ☐ MEMBERSHIP      FOR ☐ LIFE MEMBERSHIP      FOR ☐ ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP\*\*\*\*\*  
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PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION

**MEMBERSHIP DUES/\$10.00 FOR CALENDAR YEAR****LIFE MEMBERSHIP DUES SCHEDULE**

|                    |      |
|--------------------|------|
| 60-64 years        | \$75 |
| 65-69              | 60   |
| 70-74              | 45   |
| 75-77              | 30   |
| 78 years, or older | Free |

Substantial savings are available to our members who wish to apply for Life Memberships. A few of our members have sent in money for 2 or even 3 years at the annual rate of \$10 per year. They should evaluate whether they might be able to save dollars by converting these prepayments to a Life Membership.

**DO NOT SEND CASH THROUGH THE MAIL!**

Make Check or Money Order payable to:  
 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

Mail to:

**Jim S. Reeves**  
**P.O. Box 5700**  
**Brea, CA 92622-5700**

**New P.X. Item**

Pictured above is a new 303rd Bomb Group P.X. item. It's a blue cap, one size fits all, with the 8th Air Force emblem mounted on a white back-ground. Cost is \$5.50 each with the same minimum total on Bob Kidd's sheet of \$20.00. For postage and handling when cost is less than \$20.00, add \$2.50.

## The Editor's Scratchpad

As we start the 47th Anniversary of our Bomb Group and look forward to getting together once again I think it is time for us to make one last concerted effort to try and locate former members of the 303rd who still don't know of our existence; In wartime we called it a "maximum effort." Taking an educated guess, I believe we had a total of 6000 men in the 303rd during the wartime years. We now have about 1500 in our Association and I firmly believe that there are about 1500 out there waiting to be embraced into our organization. How about each of us trying to find a former 303rd during the year and getting him to attend our reunion in Norfolk-By-The-Sea.

We still haven't located four members of our original crew but I'll let our pilot Don Stoullil and our gunners George Greene and Bill Brown do those chores. I'm going to see if I can locate J.W. "Tailwheel" Kaiser, the most unforgettable character of World War II. Like myself, he was a navigator but his navigation methods probably set the ancient art back some 500 years. Like the time a pilot called and asked how far he was from destination and Tailwheel answered, "One short pencil and two fat thumbs." Taking advantage of the pilot not being able to see him in the nose compartment, he once stood on his head and put his feet in the astrodome and asked the pilot, "Are you sure we are flying straight and level?"

I roomed with him at Molesworth, Casablanca, Dakar, Africa and San Francisco, before we parted company. After the war I wrote a story about him but never tried to get it published. I'll run it in one of the future issues of the newsletter. But just to set the record straight, he was already wearing the Silver Star when he reported in for duty with the 303rd.

My trip to Germany was fantastic. My stay with Rex Reichert, the former Luftwaffe pilot and presently a member of the 303rd was quite an interesting experience. I also met a former "Abbeville Kid" who claimed 18 kills, among them were four

B-17s and four P-51s. Rae and I also met Mrs. Irma Permoser whose research on the raids on Munich was quite amazing. Not only did she know the exact number of raids on Munich but also the bomb tonnage, and the methods used in marking the targets.

I have written a story on my "Return to Yesterday" and I hope to run it in the next issue of the newsletter.

Many thanks for your letters. Your stories continue to amaze me. The more I read about the supreme sacrifice made by Bob O'Connor the more I am convinced that he should have been awarded no less that the Silver Star.

## A Gift from the 303rd TMW

On behalf of the 303rd Tactical Missile Wing, Ground Defense force assigned here at RAF Molesworth, we would like to present your association with the enclosed book. This book identifies some, not all, of the significant accomplishments of our ground defenders who up until recently provided the protection of the Ground Launched Cruise Missile assets here at Molesworth.

This book represents the spirit which was prevalent at this rural flying base back during the war. Today, that same spirit continues to exist and is kept alive by the many young men and women who proudly serve with the 303rd Tactical Missile Wing.

It is our hope that you all will

accept and enjoy this particular piece of our personal history. It is additionally our hope that we have continued your documented tradition of excellence.

As we close the 303rd's history book once again, we know that someday there will be another generation of warriors, like ourselves, to continue the proud traditions that have made the 303rd what it is today. The best!!

**Edward Herron, Major, USAF**  
**Commander, Ground Defense**

*Ed. Note: I'll bring the book to the reunion in Norfolk in September for all members in attendance to see. From there it goes to our historian Al Lehmann for safekeeping until our final resting place for our records is built.*

## LET'S GO TO WILLIAMSBURG

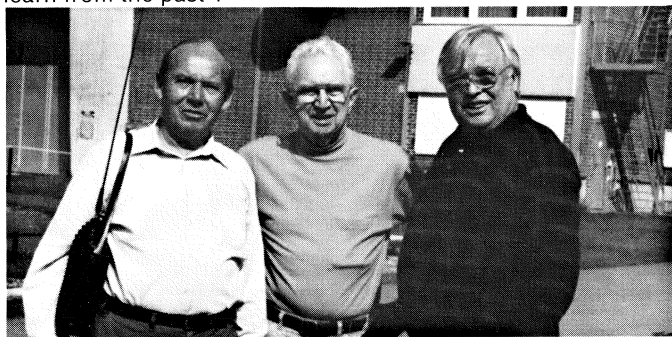
An important event on the agenda for Reunion '89 in Norfolk-by-the-Sea is an all-day excursion to Williamsburg. Chartered busses will whisk you to the Capital of Colonial Virginia, a restoration project without equal.

Through extensive research, the colonial area of the city, a mile long by nearly a half-mile wide, has been restored as nearly as possible to its 18th century appearance. There are nearly 100 buildings that have survived from the 18th and early 19th centuries. Many buildings that had disappeared have been faithfully rebuilt on their original sites.

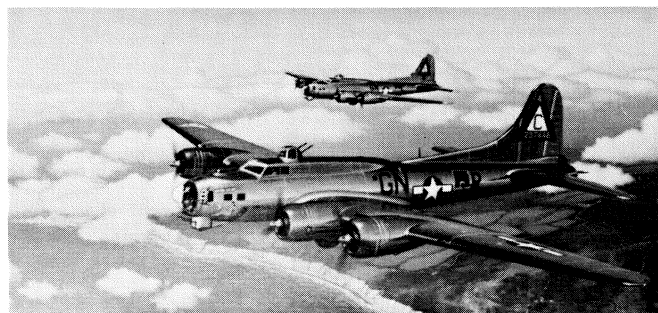
Stately public buildings and a variety of colonial homes, shops, taverns and gardens are on, or just off, historic Duke of Gloucester Street, the main throughfare of the city. Busy modern shops are clustered in Merchants Square.

Pedestrians, shopkeepers and craftsmen in period attire complement the historic buildings. Parades by the Fife and Drum Corps march down the main street; Militia musters take place on the Green. All the vitality, color and historic importance of Colonial Williamsburg are brought to life as you view the sights at your own pace or on a special guided tour.

If you've been to Williamsburg before, you'll surely want to go back for this is a living, growing National Historic Site. New buildings, new exhibits are added throughout the years. Williamsburg! Dedicated to the theme: "That the future may learn from the past".



Editor Hal Susskind (c) flanked by two former air adversaries at Stuttgart, Germany; (l) is Manfred Frey, an Abbeville Kid, credited with 18 kills including 4 B-17s and (r) Rex Reichert, presently a member of the 303rd Association who flew the Me-163 "Komet" and Ju-188. Their story will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.



If anyone is interested in a print of the painting of Miss Lace and Earthquake McGoon which appeared on the cover of the July 1987 issue of the newsletter drop a postcard to Eagle Art Galleries,

Palmer to Pine West, Suite E-2, 72-780 El Paseo Ave., Palm Desert, CA 92260. The gallery has agreed to donate part of the purchase price to the 303rd Bomb Group Association.

## Address Changes

Anderson, Mrs. Janine, 419 Firefly Dr., Michigan City, IN 46360  
 Barder, Emmett, 1015 Sibley Memorial Hwy. #106, St. Paul, MN 55118  
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 Hofreiter, Harry H., Returned insufficient address  
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 Kowalk, Francis M., 202 Brushy Creek Rd., Taylors, SC 29687  
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 McCall, John W., P.O. Box 473 Keene Valley, NY 12943  
 Merthan, Mrs. Rita, moved no forwarding address  
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 Morrill, Col. Charles, P.O. Box 63, Seabrook NH 03874  
 O'Connor, Orant, moved no forwarding address  
 O'Donnell, John J., no forwarding address  
 Rice, Charles G. Jr., Rev., R.D. 2, Box 18, Greenville, NY 12083  
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 Stouse, Mrs. June, Returned insufficient address  
 Webster, Don, 3 Wisteria Rd., Ormaond Beach, FL 32074  
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### New Member

Dugan, Charles E., 427th, tail gunner, 1370 Hollywood Blvd., Merritt Island, FL 32952  
 Brehl, Jr., Ralph C., USAF (Ret) 427th, ball turret gunner, 30 Krohn Lane, Oakland, CA 94611-2325. (415) 339-0669.

### 303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

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**Sept. 27-Oct. 1, 1989**

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